

ER

Central Intelligence Agency

er 84-1302/2



Washington, D.C. 20505

4 April 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. G. Philip Hughes
Deputy Assistant to the Vice President
for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT: Letter Concerning Panama

25X1

REFERENCE: Your Memorandum, dated 21 March 1984, Same Subject

1. As it happens, the Agency will present a Special National Intelligence Estimate, Panama: Prospects for the Election, at the NFIB meeting on 5 April 1984. In that we say that we think the election will be held on 6 May, probably, and certainly so if the Defense Forces, as personified by General Manuel Noriega, expect their candidate, Nicolas Barletta, to win.

2. Traditionally, relations have been so bad between the military and Arnulfo Arias that he was deposed by the military three previous times, 1940-41, 1949-51, and in 1968. Arias has taken every sort of stand on issues (he has been virulently anti-US just as he is now saying nice things about us) but has been unfailingly inimical to the military and he is unable to conceal his opinions. He has already insulted Noriega. So, if Arias shows signs of pulling ahead, we believe the military almost certainly will do what is necessary to ensure that Arias does not gain the Presidency.

3. While there is a bare possibility that Arias will be allowed to take office--the inauguration is not until October--we doubt it. If he does, he will not last long, given his overbearing attitudes and refusal to cater to military prerogatives, those being both questions of power and graft. The range of possibilities go beyond manipulating the process to postponing the election and a coup d'etat. The constraints on the military are several, including violent demonstrations if Arias is kept from election or office but not strong enough to prevent moves against Arias. A suggested reply to the Vice President's correspondent is attached. If particular comments on statements in that letter are needed, we shall be glad to furnish them.

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Executive Secretary

Attachment:

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Letter to

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Thanks very much for your letter about Panama. I agree to the importance of having free and honest elections on May 6th and, as you know, the President has made this a cardinal part of US policy in the region. We have been especially encouraged by the election in El Salvador.

I very much appreciated your analysis of the situation in Panama and have passed on a number of your suggestions concerning our policy in the region.

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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

March 21, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR

[redacted]
Executive Secretary
Central Intelligence Agency

25X1

SUBJECT:

Letter from [redacted]
Concerning Panama

25X1

Tom:

The Vice President has asked that I pass along the attached correspondence he has recently received [redacted] concerning developments in Panama and the prognosis for the May 6 elections and ensuing events there. I would appreciate receiving your assessment of this correspondence and your suggestions as to how it might best be answered.

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Thanks for your prompt attention to this request.

G. Philip Hughes
Deputy Assistant to the Vice President
for National Security Affairs

Attachments



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